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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

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A THESIS

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

Submitted by Ian William Craig in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Fine Arts.



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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
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| TITLE | DATE | MEDIUM | SIZE |
|---|------|---|--|
| A Forgetting Place Value: \$1,500.00 | 2006 | Hand printed artist book (lithography, screenprinting) | 14"x21"x1.5" |
| A Formation of Interstices, Part IV: The Removal of Dimension Value: \$650.00 | 2007 | Aquatint, etching, lithography, screen- printing, chine collé | Image size: 30" 21" Paper size: 44" x 30" |
| Diagramme III: Vessel Value: \$650.00 | 2007 | Aquatint, photo- etching, relief | Image size: 30" x 22" Paper size: 44" x 30" |

MFA Candidate

A POINT PARENTHETICAL ♦ IAN CRAIG

Artist Statement

According to the research of physicists such as Brian Greene and Leonard Susskind, everything we perceive to exist in the universe is created through a process of vibration.¹ From the space at which the oppositional frequencies of two particles (called strings) intersect is conjured no less than the world we live in; in essence, sound constructs space. If these theories are correct, the universe, much like our human experience, is a phenomenon unfolding at the point of balance between two at once complimentary and opposite vibrating forces. It is neither rational nor irrational; rather these two oppositions complete each other in a non-rationality on what philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze have identified in a more poetic sense as a single "plane of imminence."² It is my belief that these contemporary physical models are aiming to reconcile the contradictory nature of the universe by not reconciling it at all, but by viewing it as something that is engaged in its own becoming.

The loudest criticism confronted by research done scientifically in these fields is that they are inherently designed to not solve the universe in the Newtonian manners to which we have become accustomed. Nor have they thus far proven their viability as predictive models.³ The irony, however, is how uncannily these new non-rational models of the universe appear analogous to our human reality when we are faced with non-rational concepts integral to our existence such as death and the passage of time.

In the same way that the scientific community is made uncomfortable by the heretofore irreconcilable nature of the universe, our culture has become increasingly uncomfortable with what in human experience will always remain outside the realm of an absolute definition. What we forget about our relationships to these humanising concepts, however, is that they are made profound by their unavoidable ineffability and inefficacy. They are definable points unto themselves but make no attempt to conceal that they also parenthetically surround some further unknown, caught momentarily in the space between an external form and an internal one. It is by virtue of their inefficacy, in fact, that they become actively meaningful. The process of memory, for example, is much more about what is forgotten than what is remembered. In other words, our experience itself, much like string theory, is best served when it does not have to abide by the dominion of either rationality or irrationality. (We work with being but it is non-being that we use.⁴)

The artist Terry Winters believes science to be "a neutral, and neutralising, structure; a kind of blank metaphor (that) can be loaded with all the poetry occurring on the pictorial film of the painting."⁵ As Winters observes in his research, for all of its attempts at analysis and structure, our necessary human ineloquence has posited that science

is most effective as a container into which (to borrow from John Cage) anything at any moment could potentially be poured. The language used in describing string theory specifically, even scientifically, is much more akin to poetry rather than prediction. String theory is as though it pursues no less than a physics of spirituality. It is a scientific model based on a zero-point of awareness within a multiplicity of sources, and has for me served as a vessel with which to explore ways to seek out a place where one can reposit these scientific and experiential paradoxes as continuations of a single, complete circle and thereby manifest a dialogue with the human experience without confining it.

The forms with which I have chosen to work, called Calabi-Yau manifolds, come directly from string theory. They are forms which fold themselves into multi-dimensional spaces, and although we have no definite proof of their existence as they are innately impossible to perceive, we can infer their existence because of their necessity to produce supersymmetry within the theory. Within the context of my creative research, the exact mathematics and science are not as important as much as how the manifolds function within string theory as building blocks of becoming; not becoming as a verb, but as a noun, vibrating the universe into existence. I see these manifolds as shapes that not only form the universe and our experience, but are also the epitome of the blank metaphor of which Terry Winters speaks, both defined and completely undefinable. Since they exist on a multiplicity of dimensions, the forms that we can output visually are only the three-dimensional imprint or 'shadow' of the full form. Through my attempts at revealing them more fully in a poetic fashion, for me they have come to serve as vessels: containers that can describe the external without hiding from us the internal, the hidden graphemes in the written language of universal human existence.

I have attempted to collapse form and process, and parallel the physics by which the work was inspired, always openly inviting formal and technical contradiction into the work in a conversational, narrative and epistemological capacity: the work is at once graphic and delicate, diagrammatical but expressive, spacial but decidedly flat, mutable but fixed, formed and formless. Although all of the forms come from the same subject matter, the work presented also comes in two distinct media (not necessarily oppositional, but definitely dialogical): drawing and printmaking.

The matrix from which the bulk of the work was produced consists of a series of drawings on mylar that have been erased and reworked innumerable times over the course of (thus far) the past two years. The writer Michael Newmann observes that the process of drawing directly amplifies the sense of becoming within the forms

by being a process that “can proceed ad infinitum without closure or completion, continually part of a process that is never-ending.”⁶ I have taken this statement in a very literal way, creating these drawings in a literally never-ending process. The mylar has been drawn upon and erased and drawn upon again to such an extent that the drawings have moved beyond any need to arrive anywhere. In fact, they are always arriving and always leaving, and are completed by their inherent perpetuity. I view this continual phenomenological aspect of the drawings as an integral substrate for revealing productive tensions within these paradoxical aspects – between rational and irrational, art and science, self and other, intellectual and spiritual, etc. – that allow the contradictions to exist laterally; or, rather, in a manner that remains paradoxical but non-contradictory: the drawings appear at once in motion and at rest, perhaps disappearing from the viewer altogether in the next moment.

As a counterpoint to this, the language and processes of printmaking have allowed the drawings to serve as matrices and to solidify for an instant. The prints are translations taken at various points of the drawings' existence, the same drawing appearing in a multiplicity of states throughout the body of work. The resulting spaces appear at first to be expressive and gestural, but have actually been transposed into a laborious and meditative process. The history of what the drawings have forgotten can be traced back to a source that does not preclude what they have become.

As opposed to the relationship between the drawings and the prints being a hierarchic one (i.e. research materials versus final piece), I see the relationship as dialogical or counterpuntal, each relieving the other of the need to form an answer. This in turn creates an invaluable area of consilience wherein the questions and relationships are given focus: literally, as far as the fields of art and science are concerned; technically, between the mediums of drawing and printmaking; and metaphorically, within our spiritual and experiential selves. By engaging the scientific embodiment of becoming within the context of reciprocal acts of non-completion, the resulting spaces become attempts at realising a place that, as Deleuze would say, can plateau without culminating. My research, much like string theory, is merely an ongoing series of coördinates that surround (but do not contain) an investigation that hopes to learn as much from being observed as do the observers from the spaces themselves, pointing to possibility as opposed to prediction. This body of work is my attempt at illustrating an eternal, wondrous and ultimately human sound (one with at once a finite and infinite decay): a poetic and scientific contemporary visual universe where we can simply allow ourselves to become.

WORKS CITED

1. Please see texts such as *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton, c1999) by Brian Green and *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005) by Leonard Susskind for more information on this research.
2. Deleuze and Gilles, *Pure Immanence* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p27
3. Examples of criticism of string theory can be found in the work of physicists such as Philip Warren Anderson, Lawrence Krauss and Carlo Rovelli.
4. Lao-tze, c. 604 – c. 521 BC
5. Philips, Lisa, “The Self Similar,” in *Terry Winters* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1991) ppl3–25 and Shiff, Richard, “Manual Imagination,” in *Terry Winters: Paintings, Drawings, Prints 1994–2004* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp 18–33
6. Dexter, Emma, *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing* (New York: Phaidon, 2005), p6

A POINT PARENTHETICAL ♦ IAN CRAIG

A Forgetting Place Text

Our most difficult task in This is the process of Memory. Our Memory is a mechanism that was never meant to be difficult, but has become increasingly so since we fell into the belief that remembering is an act similar to pulling a coin out of a fountain.

There is, however, no such thing as Archive as we can perceive. Systems such as Archive that are based on Control in an absolute fashion will always require Control to function. Control can only end in entropy. When we engage Event, as in a Nowness or a Suchness, we do so paradoxically: as soon as the Event happens it is Past. In is continuously so. It is therefore important to approach process of documentation, including Memory, in a manner that limits access such that the Imagination is allowed to remain engaged, thereby creating a conduit through which Event Past can dialogue with Event Present. That which is without Present is irrelevant.

The creation of this passageway is the only thing of which we are capable. Self cannot and should not be expressed: it is a substrate, and is in this way integral, but can only perform within a language of structure. Our actual language cannot be conveyed. It changes as soon as it is spoken. It changes as soon as it is not spoken. The Self naturally forgets that this language requires the use of both speaking and listening. They are, in reality, both parts of the same process when they are actually performed and not simulated. Both speaking and listening must be present in order for a dialogue to be realised, and it is only within dialogue that conversion into an actualised form occurs.

At the threshold of this form is the revealing of Narrative, the only language that Memory speaks. It is a constant. This form is the two actions at once and neither one nor the other. It is not limited in the same fashion as we are. Narrative and Creation are in this way only reactive. Never mistake simulation for Narrative. Simulation travels only in a single direction.

Memory is then actually very simple: it is what occurs when Moment and Time are entered into the same equation when one is not concerned with the result, where Time is a shadow cast by Moment and Moment is a necessary eclipse of cognisance. Neither Time nor Moment is capable of being forgotten. All structure, including that of Archive, depends upon the distortion inherent in this equation to operate. The power of Memory is therefore its constant failure and unending reconstruction. It is a multiple zero-point of awareness. We are beautiful in our inefficacy: it means we are listening.

Our only purpose in This, therefore, is the generation of parentheses. Our language has never had words for sentences.

A POINT PARENTHETICAL ♦ IAN CRAIG

Slide List

1. GALLERY ENTRANCE PANEL

2. DIDACTIC PANEL

3 – 11. AN ARRIVAL EVERLASTING

Oil stick, litho crayon, ink and plaka on dry brush mylar
Each panel 30" x 21", a total of 36 panels
2005 – present

12 – 36. A FORGETTING PLACE

Hand printed artist book (lithography, screenprinting)
2006

37. THE STORY THAT WRITES ITSELF, PART II

Wax lift, aquatint, collagraph, chine collé
Image size 72" x 48", paper size 84" x 60"
2005 – 2007

38. THE STORY THAT WRITES ITSELF, PART III

Wax lift, aquatint, collagraph, chine collé
Image size 48" x 36", paper size 56" x 42"
2005 – 2007

39. EVERYWHERE IS FALLING DOWN EVERYWHERE

Mixed drawing media on paper
96" x 48"
2007

40. A LOVE SONG FOR URGENCY

Mixed drawing media on paper
96" x 48"
2007

41. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part I: The Silence Underneath

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

42. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part II: The Line From Which to Throw Thought

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

43. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part III: The Reason Why These Windows Do Not Open

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

44. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part IV: The Removal of Dimension

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

45. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part V: The Unoccupied Metaphor

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

46. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part VI: The Folded Moment

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

47. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part VII: The Scattering of Form into Time

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

48. A FORMATION OF INTERSTICES

Part VIII: The Fire Upon Which to Throw Answers

Aquatint, etching, lithography, screenprinting and chine collé
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 44" x 30"
2007

49. DIAGRAMME I: Surface

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

50. DIAGRAMME II: Space

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

51. DIAGRAMME III: Void

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

52. DIAGRAMME IV: Vessel

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

53. DIAGRAMME V: Drift

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

54. DIAGRAMME VI: Delerium

Aquatint, etching
Image size 30" x 21", paper size 40" x 32"
2007

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